DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 450 539 EC 308 297

AUTHOR	Cohen, Michael; Heumann, Judith E.
TITLE	Clarification of the Role of the IEP Team in Selecting Individual Accommodations, Modifications in Administration, and Alternate Assessments for State and District-Wide Assessments of Student Achievement. Memorandum.
INSTITUTION	Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (ED), Washington, DC.; Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2001-01-12
NOTE	4p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Accommodations (Disabilities); Academic Achievement; Agency Role; *Disabilities; *Educational Assessment; Elementary Secondary Education; Federal Regulation; *Individualized Education Programs; Outcomes of Education; State Departments of Education; State Programs; State Standards; Teamwork; *Testing; Testing Problems
IDENTIFIERS	Alternative Assessment; *Testing Accommodations (Disabilities)

ABSTRACT

This policy statement clarifies the role of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team in selecting individual accommodations, modifications in administration, and alternate assessments for state and district-wide assessments. It states that neither the state education agency (SEA) nor the local education agency (LEA) can limit the authority of the IEP team to select individual accommodations and modifications in administration needed for participation in state and district-wide assessments. However, the SEA or LEA must ensure that their assessments are valid, reliable, and consistent with professional and technical standards. Thus, it is possible for an IEP team to select accommodations or modifications that produce scores that are deemed invalid under state or local polices for purposes of reporting, accountability, or determining student benefits such as promotion or high school diplomas. The policy statement goes on to state that although the SEA and LEA cannot constrain the IEP team's decision about accommodations and modifications, the SEA and LEA can provide guidelines and training to assist IEP teams in making informed decisions. The statement discusses considerations that must be examined as SEAs and LEAs endeavor to preserve the authority of IEP teams while at the same time maximizing student participation. (CR)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 450 539

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Washington, D.C. 20202

January 12, 2001

MEMORANDUM

DATE:

TO: Chief State School Officers
State Directors of Special Education
State Assessment Directors
State Title I Directors

FROM: Michael Cohen
Assistant Secretary for
Elementary and Secondary Education

Judith E. Heumann
Assistant Secretary for
Special Education and Rehabilitative Services

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SUBJECT: Clarification of the Role of the IEP Team in Selecting Individual Accommodations, Modifications in Administration, and Alternate Assessments for State and District-wide Assessments of Student Achievement

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 (Public Law No.105-17) gives the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team the authority to select individual accommodations and modifications in administration needed for a child with a disability to participate in State and district-wide assessments of student achievement. If the IEP team determines that the child will not participate in a particular State or district-wide assessment of student achievement (or part of an assessment), the IEP team states how the child will be assessed.

According to OSEP/OSERS memorandum 00-24 (August 24, 2000), neither the SEA nor the LEA can limit the authority of the IEP team to select individual accommodations and modifications in administration needed for a child with a disability to participate in State and district-wide assessments of student achievement. However, the SEA or LEA must ensure that their assessments are valid, reliable, and consistent with professional and technical standards, particularly for assessments that will have important consequences for the student or the school. Thus, it is possible for an IEP team to select individual accommodations or modifications in administration that produce scores that are deemed invalid under State or local policies for purposes of reporting, accountability, or determining student benefits such as promotion or high school diplomas. Clearly, the

EC 308297

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

IEP team must base all decisions regarding accommodations or modifications on a full understanding of the consequences for reporting and accountability.
Although the SEA and LEA cannot constrain the IEP team's decisions about accommodations and modifications, the SEA and LEA can provide guidelines and training to assist IEP teams in making informed decisions. Such guidelines should delineate instructions and conditions for the appropriate administration of a selected accommodation. For example, these guidelines can define the role of the scribe when the IEP team has selected dictation of answers as an accommodation, or prescribe conditions for reading test items aloud if the IEP team has selected reading test items as an accommodation. Accommodations guidelines should also clearly inform IEP teams of any implications for how scores will be reported or any consequences for students or schools resulting from the selected accommodations.

SEAs and LEAs can also monitor the use of accommodations, modifications, and alternate assessments to identify questionable patterns of use. Remedial actions may include providing additional training or support for IEP teams, parents, and students.

A number of important considerations must be examined as SEAs and LEAs endeavor to preserve the authority of IEP teams while at the same time maximizing the participation of students with disabilities in reporting, accountability, and educational benefits associated with State and district-wide assessments. One important consideration is the basis for the SEA's or LEA's determination that an accommodation or modification is invalid for a specific purpose. For example, the use of national norms as the basis for public reporting and/or school or student accountability requires that the administration conditions for the State/local assessment match those of the norm group. This is particularly problematic when the norm group does not represent a broad population, including children with disabilities, and when accommodations are not included in the norming process. Use of performance standards rather than national norms as the basis for reporting or accountability may mitigate this concern. For scores expressed as performance levels, guidelines should be provided for changes in content, test conditions, or scoring procedures that would, in effect, redefine the performance being assessed or adjust the range of performance within a level.

Another important consideration is the nature of the consequences or "stakes" connected with an assessment. If assessments are associated with high stakes for the students, such as promotion, diplomas, or access to programs, then certain legal principles would clearly apply regarding the possible denial of benefits on the basis of disability. SEAs, LEAs, and IEP teams would need to consider very carefully the basis for invalidating the student's score, the availability of less restrictive alternatives, the fairness of the process for involving and informing parents and students, the possibility of using additional evidence in lieu of a single test score, and other factors. A document entitled The Use of Tests When Making High-Stakes Decisions for Students: A Resource Guide for Educators and Policy-Makers developed by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the U. S. Department of Education presents useful information on this topic.[1]

---

[1] This document can be obtained by telephone at 800-421-3481, by e-mail at OCR@ed.gov, or on the World Wide Web at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCR/testing/index.html. Individuals who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call OCR's TDD number at 877-521-2172.

If assessments are associated with high stakes for teachers, schools, or systems, then States and districts should be vigilant to minimize any policy implications that provide incentives for selecting accommodations or modifications that invalidate students' scores for accountability purposes. Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Title I) requires that each State must have a State assessment system that serves as the primary means for determining whether schools and districts receiving Title I funds are making adequate yearly progress toward enabling all students in Title I schools to reach high standards. All students with disabilities in those schools in the grades being assessed must be included in the State assessment system, and the scores of students with disabilities must be included in the assessment system for purposes of public reporting and school and district accountability. Under Title I, State assessment systems must include, for accountability purposes, every student who has attended school within a single school district for a full academic year. And, States must explain how scores from alternate assessments are integrated into their accountability systems. To assure equitable treatment of schools under Title I, the SEA must guarantee the comparability of scores across schools and over time. This may require uniformity of some assessment procedures. The same assessment when used for different purposes might permit greater variation in assessment conditions.

A number of strategies are available to allow SEAs and LEAs to meet requirements for including students with disabilities in reporting and accountability, maintaining valid and reliable assessment results, and preserving the authority of IEP teams. For example, IDEA requires that States develop guidelines for the participation of children with disabilities in alternate assessments, and that States also develop alternate assessments. These requirements also extend to LEAs when districtwide assessments are involved. SEAs and LEAs should develop guidelines that fully inform IEP teams, parents, and students of the appropriate uses of the alternate assessments and possible consequences of their use.

Assessment accommodations should be chosen on the basis of the individual student's needs and should generally be consistent with the accommodations provided during instruction. SEAs and LEAs should commit themselves to expanding both the use of effective accommodations and research on their impact in order to ensure the broadest range of participation in their State and district-wide assessments. Some states have successfully collaborated with test developers to expand accommodations and are collecting disaggregated data about use and impact of accommodations.

cc: Federal Resource Center
Regional Resource Centers